

# Community Television Review

National Federation of Local Cable Programmers

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## Channels for Change: Tools for Development

By Sara Stuart

### -NFLCP Convention Keynote Address

I would like to speak about the experience of grassroots video teams in developing countries, about the commonalities between your work and mine, and about how these commonalities relate to the conference theme: Channels for Change. Although I work with vegetable vendors in India, with agricultural extensionists in South America and with community organizers in Zimbabwe and although these groups are not usually producing for broadcast, we have a great deal in common. Our roles, our responsibilities, our vision, and philosophy are quite similar.

We both have a primary responsibility to training people who, often, have had no previous experience with video equipment. We teach ordinary people who are active in their community. They are people of all backgrounds, all levels of education, all ages, degrees of confidence and ability with electronic technology. We demystify the technological aspect and introduce approaches utilizing these tools. If we do this well, they learn to make programs that meet their goals and needs, that help them accomplish specific ends. Through learning to do this, the people we train grow more confident; they are empowered. Therefore, our work has three outcomes: the various finished tapes; the empowerment gained through the process of mastering this powerful technology; and the impact of these producers' activities in the community.

What do I do? I help to establish and train self-sufficient video teams within existing, experienced organizations that are working for local development. Let me describe one of these teams which works in Ahmedabad, a large textile city between Bombay and Delhi.

The Self Employed Women's Association, SEWA, is working with poor urban and rural women. SEWA takes a trade union approach to the concerns of its over 24,000 members. (89% of India's population earns their living in the "informal sector.") SEWA provides its members with skills training, cooperative mechanisms to aid in production and marketing, child care and health benefits. SEWA also advocates women's rights before the authorities and operates a cooperative bank. By combining struggle and development, SEWA members are fighting to protect their interests and to gain their rightful place in the economy.

The experiences of Leelaben Datania, a member of Video SEWA, illustrates the power of video as a tool in development and organizing. In the jargon of the development world, Leelaben is a "very simple woman." That means she is poor and uneducated. Leelaben Datania and her fam-



ily have sold vegetables in the Manekchowk Market of Ahmedabad for several

*continued on pg. 4 "SEWA"*

## Victory for Access in Erie !

The Third Circuit Court of Appeals has rejected challenges raised by the cable franchisee for the City of Erie to access and franchise fee provisions in the Erie franchise. *Erie Telecommunications v. City of Erie*, No. 87-3648 (3d Cir. July 28, 1988) had attracted a substantial amount of industry attention because it was anticipated the Court might rule on the constitutionality of the access and franchise fee provisions of the Erie franchise. The decision of the Court did not in fact address the constitutional issues, but the decision may provide substantial protection to access and to cities. This is because under the decision, existing operators which seek to challenge

particular provisions of the franchise may be forced to choose between pursuing a challenge and voiding the entire franchise or abiding by the entire agreement (thereby preserving the protections the franchise provides the existing operator).

In Erie, the cable franchisee, Erie Telecommunications Inc. ("ETI"), asked the Court to modify the franchise to eliminate access and franchise fee provisions which ETI claimed violated the First Amendment.

The Court concluded terms of the franchise "which are so fundamental to the parties' agreement" could not be modified

*continued on pg 12 "ERIE"*



# *The Urban Verb is Access - Several Urban Access Centers Report on How Access Has Arrived in the City*

## **Atlanta**

Atlanta has three separate cable access channels - a Library Channel, a government channel and People TV. The Library Channel, operated through the Fulton County/City of Atlanta Public Library system, is a 24-hour channel that presents local productions, educational programming from such sources as the Encyclopedia Britannica and public domain films. The channel reaches 200,000 subscribers in Fulton County and averages over 40 viewer responses to programming each week. Three regular programs are produced in-house: an author's talk show, a library information show, and a program on library services. The Fulton County Commissioners' board meetings are also regularly cablecast. Local non-profit groups and individuals have no direct access to the facilities, but can produce PSAs at no charge and submit them for cablecast on the channel.

From 6 to 9:00 p.m. each day the government channel cablecasts city government programs and activities, including all city council meetings. A magazine format show, "Atlanta International," focuses on Atlanta's international connections, initiated primarily by Major Andrew Young. This summer, the demonstrations, parties and politics of the Democratic National Convention were featured along with coverage of behind-the-scenes activities that lead to the actual convention.

People TV is Atlanta's non-profit cable access channel and the only channel that is open to outside producers. It is currently undergoing major changes in leadership and facilities. The general manager position is open and the channel will move into new facilities, with a new studio, this fall. Programming is local and diverse, ranging from religious talk shows to late night music and comedy. People TV also covered the Democratic National Convention and worked with visiting access groups by providing studio and equipment access.

## **Boston**

Boston Neighborhood Network (BNN-TV) cablecasts 10 to 15 hours of original access programs each week produced by over 400 trained community producers. BNN-TV offers training workshop in portable, studio, editing and van production.

Successful access programs includes ethnic language series—Spanish, Creole, and Italian. The International



Women's Day Video Festival attracted tapes from around the country and was distributed on Deep Dish TV. Special event coverage has been terrific—St. Patrick's Day Parade, Bunker Hill Day Parade and others. Dozens of local political, entertainment, and cultural programs by a diverse and creative access community have been produced.

BNN-TV also produces a daily news program, "Neighborhood Network News"—our most well known and well watched program—which reports exclusively on community issues and events. Major issues this year have included: city elections, increases in crime and drugs, housing crises, racial tension due to integration of public housing, and hundreds of other local issues. BNN-TV also produces high school football and basketball games as well as many other public affairs and cultural programs with corporate underwriting.

BNN-TV received a special citation from Gov. Dukakis for the drug education series, "Drug Dilemma."



## **Chicago**

Chicago's Office of Cable Communications has a staff of 20, led by Cable Administrator Robin Charleston, to oversee two cable operators, Group W Cable and TCI's Chicago Cable TV. They serve approximately 225,000 subscribers, or 20% of Chicago households. Two municipal channels are programmed by the OCC and seen throughout the city: City Hall TV, Channel 23, and Windy City TV, Channel 49. The Cable Office has successfully enforced the local origination provisions of the contracts, although TCI is appealing in court, and the office recently submitted a \$600,000 budget proposal to the city to launch regular live coverage of city council meetings.

Operating with a staff of 22 full-time and 11 part-time employees, and an annual budget of over \$1 million, Chicago Access Corporation provides public and educational access on 4 channels: CAN TV 19, the flagship access channel; Chicago Learns TV 21, the educational access channel; FYI Chicago TV 27, the computer graphics magazine channel for Chicago non-profits; and CAN CALL TV 42, the test channel you CAN CALL. Plans are in the works for a 5th channel to be launched in January, HOTLINE 36, providing continuous, live, informational, call-in programming from a mini studio at CAC.

In August, CAC reached a milestone, 1000 certified access producers. The corporation's studio, 5 edit suites and 10 portapacks are extensively used. Series titles reflect the diversity of Chicago's public access programming: "Godzina Polonusa" (Polish Producers Coalition), "Orgullo Hispano" (Hispanic Producers Cooperative), and "Simaye-Azade" (Iranian Student Society in Chicago). On a lighter note, there's "Cableville USA" (Duck Logic), "Off-Hollywood," and a local soap, "The Sheridans of Chicago." Access producers are still celebrating recognition from HOME-TOWN USA: 19 finalists and 2 winners.

*continued on pg 10 "Urban"*





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## *From The Chair...*

by Sharon Ingraham  
Chairperson of the NFLCP

Finding new and useful ways to provide membership services to the diverse interest groups within the NFLCP is always a high priority and an ongoing challenge to the NFLCP staff and Board. Even as we exit a year which saw many successes, such as the National Convention, the new CTR, overwhelming response to Hometown and an exciting First Amendment Conference, feedback from the members indicates that we must take a fresh look at projects and services.

Now that we have a pretty good handle on NFLCP finances, the next step will be sweeping looks at what the NFLCP provides and the manner in which we provide it. That may mean changes in the convention, such as the addition of professional in-service training. That may mean an entirely different staffing model for the National Office. I think that the incoming Board of Directors will be flexible and willing to listen to member needs. This means that you have a responsibility, as well. You have to help us meet your needs, by telling us what those needs are.

Thanks to the many people who served so well in the past year. They include: the outgoing members of the National Board, Fred Johnson, Trisha Dair, Tom Karwin, Marcia Standiford, Dave Olive, Bob



*International ASTEC visitor Wolf Siebert joined Sharon Ingraham and the NFLCP at the Hometown Awards in Tampa. See related story on page 5.*

Oringel, Dirk Koning, David Keyes, Jan Sanders, Ron Cooper and Ricardo Rodriguez; others for their work on Hometown, CTR, and the 1st Amendment Conference: Steve Israelsky, Dave Olive, Sue Buske, the CTR Editorial Board, Fred Johnson, Lisa Strasburg and Andrew Blau; and to the Local Planning Committee in Tampa, headed by Frank Turano and Bob Sepe. Also, great thanks to Reginald Carter, who is currently handling the work in the National Office.

## **SUCCESSFUL CONVENTION IN TAMPA!**

By Sue Buske

Nearly 1,000 people assembled at the Tampa Hyatt Regency for the 1988 NFLCP Annual Convention. The convention attendees mirrored the diversity of programming appearing on access and local origination channels across the United States. Participants included: cable television company employees; a senior citizen production team from Dearborn, Michigan; city cable administrators; social reformers; non-profit access corporation managers; and university faculty and administrators.

Highlighting the convention were three keynote presentations by nationally renowned telecommunication leaders. Sara Stuart, Director of the Village Video Network presented the opening keynote address. Ms. Stuart, an expert in interna-

tional communications, works with organizations from developing countries, teaching groups to use video as an organizing tool. Stuart took convention attendees back to a fundamental idea of public access, "using video as a tool for creating change at the community level."

Dr. Christopher Sterling, Director of the Telecommunications Policy program at George Washington University, gave a keynote address which focused on the future of cable within the regulatory arena and telco entry into cable. Sterling stated that major regulatory changes at the FCC and NTIA were in store for the cable industry if Michael Dukakis were to be elected to the presidency. He also indicated that "a top-to-bottom adjustment of the Cable Act" is possible, although

*continued on pg 6 "Convention"*



## "SEWA" *cont. from page 1*

generations. In the late 1970's, she joined SEWA and became an organizer in order to fight the police harassment of small scale vendors and to gain licenses and recognition from the municipal authority. As a part of this struggle, Leelaben testified in India's Supreme Court on behalf of the vendors. She has become a respected leader of the market women.

In 1984, Leelaben and 19 other SEWA members took part in a three-week video training workshop. "I did not know what video was," Leelaben recently explained. "Still, I learned to make programs, to operate equipment and to do replays. I am illiterate and do not have electricity in my house, but I learned to make video programs and became a producer."

Several months after the initial video workshop the Indian Courts ordered the municipality of Ahmedabad to negotiate with the vendors of Manekchowk Market. The negotiations centered on the rights of small scale street vendors to claim space in the market place. The authorities claimed the vendors obstructed traffic and needed to be cleared off the streets.

After years of organizing and struggle, the municipality made its first constructive response and this caused a great deal of excitement at SEWA. A meeting to inform the representatives of the vendors was called and three members of Video SEWA decided to tape it. Leelaben was the sound recordist. The vendors were comfortable with her and the rest of the video crew. The taping did not inhibit or interfere with the meeting.

The municipality had offered to make a market place on a terrace available to the vendors. The women's reactions were manifold: some were skeptical; some expressed concern about the political pressures brought to bear on SEWA; some felt no price was too heavy to pay to escape police harassment; some were very emotional and enthused. Eventually, they formulated a list of conditions and concerns. The camera captured the essence of this highly charged discussion, the words and faces of grassroots women making decision about their own lives. After the taping, Ela Bhatt, General Secretary of SEWA, asked herself, "Would the municipal authorities be so indifferent to the problems of these

women if they had been present at the meeting?" She invited the Municipal Commissioner to view the tape informally. As he watched the agitated faces of the women, he was moved by their fear of the police, their sense of solidarity and their distrust of the municipality. Listening to them on video meant that he could be open without betraying his emotions; he could be himself and not the Municipal Commissioner. The women would never have spoken to him directly as they did on the tape, and he would not have been able to hear them in the same way. This tape proved invaluable to the negotiations between the vendors and the Municipality; it also shaped the way Leelaben and the member's of SEWA understood the potential of video.



Very often we make the mistake of measuring the success of our work by the numbers of viewers we reach. This is a serious error. How often do we assess our work by what it helps us to accomplish? The unedited tape with its audience of one helped accomplish more than programs that have reached millions of viewers.

One of my favorite quotes about Video SEWA is from my colleague, Professor E.V. Chitnis, former Director of the Indian Space Research Organization, and a great leader in peaceful uses of outer space: "Why was Gandhi so effective in his communication? The answer I get is that he was not a professional communicator. Although he wrote every day like a journalist, the message came from the heart and the needs of the people. He used the medium of salt for communication and his message became meaningful to the poorest of the poor. Video SEWA is succeeding in communicating because they are tackling the real problems like

Gandhi did. So, that becomes the medium, not the video or other things — they are just tools."

My role, like yours, in this whole process has been as a trainer, a facilitator, a provider of technical assistance and a reporter to funding agencies and others concerned with international development. My central objective is to strengthen the work of community organizers, field workers and extensionists. If they are succeeding in what they do, then they are already skilled communicators who know the issues and who are trusted at the grassroots. In your communities there are similar leaders and organizers in tenants associations, community centers, health services, churches etc. Like Leelaben, they are agents of change and community development.

In Leelaben's hands, in the hands of members of your community, this technology and these channels are very potent tools for social transformation, change and development. But, while these tools are effective and powerful, it doesn't mean that change comes easily. Non-violent struggle in the Gandhian sense is not for the short attention span crowd. It is not a process for passive receivers; it is a process of raising awareness, organizing and taking collective action. Leelaben and Video SEWA's particular experiences with video as a tool for training are not universal. What is universal is the adaptability of this technology and its particular advantages in the hands of local organizers and extensionists. Video SEWA creatively adapts this medium to their philosophy and approach to grassroots struggle.

We are not part of mainstream TV and video and we must not measure ourselves against it. We are explorers, discovering new adaptations, methods and applications of this new medium. Community Access & Media Centers are a laboratory for developing new ways to use this medium to serve the community, to make change. Like Video SEWA, our medium can come from the heart and the needs of the people. We should be asking ourselves how we are using these resources to improve the social, economic, environmental and spiritual quality of our lives and the lives of others in our communities.

*Sara Stuart is Coordinator of Village Video Network c/o Martha Stuart Communications, New York City, New York.*



## INTERNATIONAL ACCESS AWARD PRESENTED

"The Land of CAN," a program produced by Gary Ellis and the staff of Multnomah Cable Access in Gresham, Oregon, was the winner of the first annual, *The Agence Specialisee dans les Techniques de Communications, ASTEC International Award*. The program was selected from among the 1988 winning Hometown USA entries.

According to ASTEC Vice President Dr. Wolf Siegert, "This award is to promote the exchange of programs and their producers between local community networks in Europe and the USA. The goal is to create links between citizens using video as a supplementary tool of communications and people as the major media."

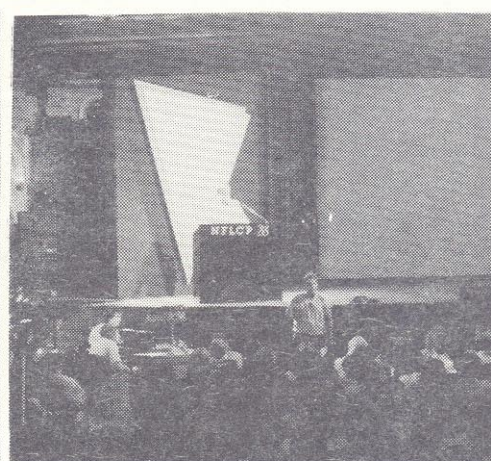
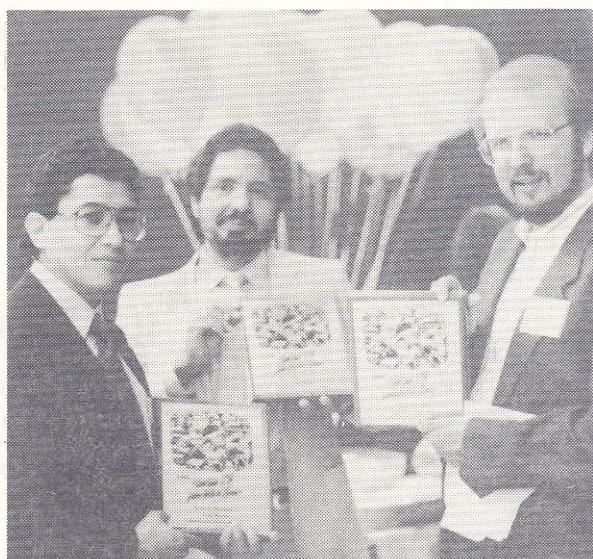
"The Land of CAN" is a fairy tale about a "couch potato," a man who watches the same old shows on TV. One day, his TV set breaks down, he faints, and then awakens, a prisoner in this own television. The CAN fairy, (Community Access Network), introduces him to a new world of Access television. After showing him the diversity of CAN programming, she releases him. Back on his couch, he finds himself in front of newly discovered community television.

According to Siegert, "This five-minute promotional tape is well thought out, concise, fun to watch, and will be understandable to European audiences." Siegert was especially pleased at the appropriate use of television special effects, which are often overused in television.

Gary Ellis was invited to show his tape along with ten other programs which received Honorable Mention from ASTEC, to European cable audiences in Paris and Berlin.

ASTEC International is based in France and is an international non-profit organization for the promotion and development of techniques serving communication among different peoples.

ASTEC and NFLCP have been working together for several years. Members of both organizations have travelled to each other's countries, exchanging views and experiences on community programming. In 1987, an international seat was created on the NFLCP Board of Directors to further strengthen the relationship to the international community.



*Innovative production ideas were successfully added to the '88 Hometown Awards. The presentation was later telecast to a national audience of 13,000,000 homes.*

### "VITAL" PROGRAM FROM ONE HOMETOWN WINNER !

On July 14, 1988, the NFLCP honored Barb Gregornik, 25, with a Hometown USA video award for her compelling biography, "My Life Story." Gregornik is the first person with mental retardation to win a national video award. Her video was also selected by festival judges to be screened at festivals and aired on television in Europe.

There were 90 winners out of the 1,700 entries submitted to the 1988 video festival. Gregornik's award in the "Documentary Profile" category was for a video about her happy childhood in Schaumburg, Illinois. She was born with a genetic disorder, Treacher Collins syndrome, and a life expectancy of eight years. She is also hearing impaired.

Gregornik learned video as part of the Project VITAL (Video Induced Training and Learning), a cable access production training program developed by the Little City Foundation in Palatine, Illinois. She has lived at Little City, a residential community of 300 children and adults with mental retardation, since 1984. Her involvement with Project VITAL began a little over a year ago.

Groups in Illinois, New York and Minnesota currently offer Project VITAL, which was created by Alan Dachman, director of planning and administration at Little City. "Barb showed me that everyone has a disability," says Dachman. "Our disability is getting stuck, being mired. This is a lesson she taught me. She does not wake up every day and say, 'I'm a disabled person.' She gets up and goes out and lives her life. She focuses on her abilities. She is not going to let a moment of her life get by her."

**Project VITAL 4801 West Peterson Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60646 or (312) 282-2207.**



## "Convention" cont.

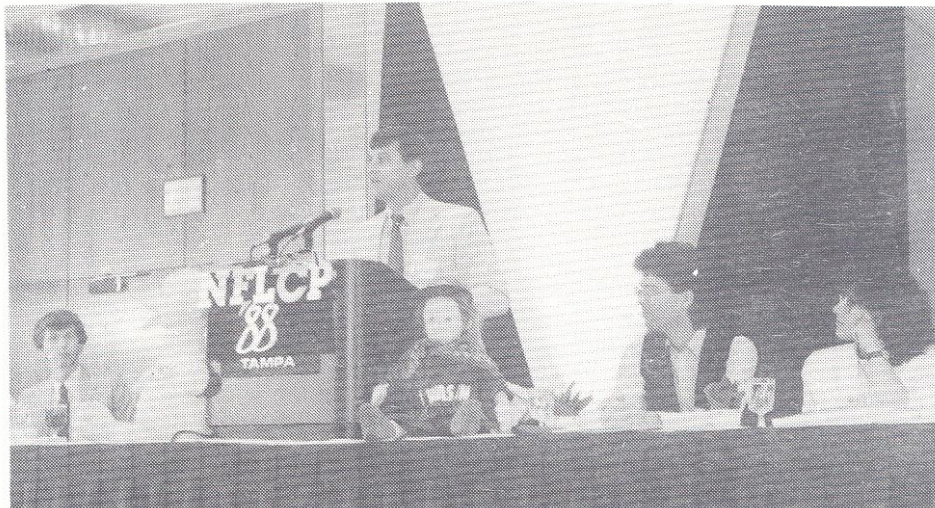
Congress would prefer an industry/city compromise as we the case with the Cable Act when it was passed in 1984.

A noticeable difference between this years' convention and earlier ones was the level of support provided to the convention by the cable industry, including the presence of cable company executives. During a workshop featuring cable executives, Robert Thomson, vice president of government affairs for TCI, stated "local programming will emerge as an important competitive edge for the industry." Further, he believes "it is in the interest of both cable operators and local programming advocates to build bridges and improve the future of cable in general and local programming in particular."

Another key issue on the minds of many attendees was the recent action of the Kansas City Council which eliminated a public access channel because of a program cablecast by the Klu Klux Klan. The subject of access program censorship surfaced in several workshops. Baltimore Law School professor Michael Meyerson stated that the (Kansas City) Councils' vote to transform the public access channel into a local origination channel under cable company control was a case of blatant discrimination because the racist organization was singled out. According to Meyerson, "The solution to speech we disagree with, is not censorship or the elimination of that speech, but rather more speech in response to it." The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) will be filing a suit against the Kansas City Council on behalf of the KKK. The case will present the issue of whether a city that eliminates access for purposes of eliminating speech is acting in violation of the Constitution.

Over 90 workshops geared to all levels of expertise were offered at the 1988 NFLCP Convention. Topics included: lighting and audio techniques, equipment purchasing, community outreach techniques, updates on current cable litigation, interconnection of access and local programming channels, institution networks, and cable regulatory techniques.

A major highlight of the convention was the Awards Night event which was held at the historic Tampa Theater. Ninety winners of the Hometown USA



*Diversity was the key throughout the '88 convention. Steve Tuttle addressed attendees at the Saturday Luncheon; equipment vendors displayed hardware; and still, people found time to enjoy a well orchestrated volleyball game at the Fri. Nite Beach Bash.*

Video Festival received awards that evening. The winning videotapes were selected from more than 1,600 entries produced in 350 communities from 40 states.

Several other major NFLCP organizational awards were also presented during the Awards Night ceremony. Michael Meyerson received the George Stoney Award for Humanistic Communications and Jan Leshner-Ireland received the Sue Buske Leadership Award for commitment and services to the NFLCP.

The final keynote speech of the convention featured Steve Tuttle, Editor and Associate Publisher of Cablevision magazine. Tuttle addressed the relationship between local programmers, cable operators, and cities. "Cable went around for years talking about the wonderful things it could accomplish, but for federal treatment making it ancillary to broadcasting, but for must carry rules, but for—but for—. Nowadays there are few if any of those, 'but for' shields for cable to hide behind. This industry's initial elation

from deregulation as given way to the sobering view that being free from artificial constraints on its business also means it is free to fail in the marketplace." "A change in character is happening in the industry. The change comes from an understanding that cable is a service industry whose success depends on its image in local communities."

Tuttle also suggested ways in which the cable regulator, access advocates and the cable operator could work together to create a healthy environment for access and L.O. in the community.

Convention evaluations indicated that attendees found the workshops and informal networking at the convention a very positive and valuable experience. According to one attendee the convention was "fast paced, insightful, practical, and well organized." Another convention attendee stated, "I can't wait to start doing the things I learned at the convention!" *Sue Buske is President of the Buske Group, Sacramento, California.*





## CONSTITUENCY BASED PLANNING AND PROBLEM SOLVING SESSIONS...

Librarians, educators, cable regulators, access managers and community producers had their concerns addressed at the conference and specially designed constituency based sessions. To gain a sense of the problems, achievements and plans for the future of each group, leaders of the constituency based conference sessions were asked to report on the discussions of their groups. Following are their reports.

### LIBRARIANS

Participants in the library constituency group sessions repeatedly emphasized the great diversity that is found in the levels of library involvement with cable television and in the types of programs libraries are producing and cablecasting. Some public libraries operate a public access channel and facilities, while other public libraries provide space for the same. Some libraries program full-time, dedicated library access channels; some regularly program daily, weekly or monthly; while others only cablecast special events. Many libraries produce their programs in-house or with volunteer producers and, to varying degrees, supplement their locally produced programs with public domain films and pre-produced programs. (A nation-wide library tape exchange network is a possibility in the near future.) Library cablecasts feature authors, storytellers, book talks, library services and activities, and local video histories, all of which are recognizable library functions, plus concerts, plays, high school sports, community events, local meetings, training and in-

structional "How to"s, ethnic, historical and seasonal programs, forums on issues, and even "All Request TV" where viewers call the library to schedule public domain movies. No formula exists for how libraries should relate to cable television, but libraries are enjoying successful community service with the above methods and programs.

The library constituency group expressed deep concern over the concept that non-profit access corporations are exclusively the only organizations that can successfully operate community access facilities. In the truest meaning of the term, libraries are access facilities with a long, hard fought history of defending First Amendment rights, and there are successful examples of libraries operating public access facilities. The library constituency group feels strongly that the NFLCP should consider writing a manifesto based on the principles included in the American Library Association's Intellectual Freedom Statement. The group also offers to serve as a bridge between the NFLCP and the ALA to build the identity of the NFLCP; to increase the circulation of CTR; and to increase NFLCP membership. The message from the libraries is that there are a multitude of ways that libraries provide and enhance community television and that the public library is one of the community producer's greatest potential ally's.

### K-12 EDUCATORS

K-12 educators discussed their concerns relating to administration, teacher/media-specialist relationships, the role of

the educational cable channel within the institution, community resource development for video programs, ethics, working with students, student programming, and the use of video as a training tool. Though members of the group were from distant parts of the United States, their concerns and approaches were surprisingly similar.

Most of those who participated in the session felt that their administrations were very supportive of video/cable programs and curricula. School boards and administrators did not have to be convinced of the value of teaching production and critical viewing skills, etc. They already believed that television can play a positive role in education. However, support was not always reflected in actual budgets. Many felt that administrations had little understanding of the resources needed to produce programming, particularly in terms of time and personnel. In general, budget allocations did not allow for the necessary support staff.

Another concern expressed was that video curricula and production were sometimes assigned to a media specialist without an appreciation of the elements needed to make the program work. For example, media specialists often have difficulty finding low cost training and development programs to learn the skills needed for video production. "How do I teach my students when I am still in the process of learning the material?" asked one teacher. There was an almost unanimous belief that school district administrations viewed their cable channels as vehicles for public relations. Many had encountered the uncomfortable situation of having to censor or 'redirect' student productions so as to not reflect badly on the school. They discussed the difficulty of having to convey the importance of journalistic integrity and ethics to their students while insuring that a positive picture was sent to the homes of parents and taxpayers.

The issue of ethics arose out of the discussion of copyright as well. School plays and choral concerts are shown on many educational access channels. Students in beginning production classes scamper to create music videos to their favorite pop tunes. Though copyright licensors have been 'understanding' and lenient toward local cable programmers who violate copyright, uses of licensed

*continued on pg. 8*



material is still illegal.

These issues raise the following questions: How can educators make school performances and student productions available on their channels without violating copyright? Though the programs are non-commercial and telecast on educational channels, should an educator overlook copyright violations by students? Does it deliver a mixed message to students?

Several members of the group explained the difficulty they encountered when trying to gain copyright clearance for music or other material. They felt that more clarification and guidance was needed in the area of copyright. "School sporting events are the lifeblood of almost every school's cable program" the educators pointed out. Covering football and basketball games provided many with the opportunity for other television endeavors. In one case, new equipment purchases were approved since they were necessary for sports coverage. In the sports arena, some schools have found potential for generating revenue by making dubs of games and events available.

## ACCESS MANAGERS

The access managers attending this year's convention face many common problems. Creative solutions to these problems vary as much as the access programs produced across the country.

Operating resources differ greatly among centers represented at the convention. Despite these differences, centers work on similar objectives. Access management continues to put great emphasis in training the public in television production. Although there is always room for improvement in training curriculum, the focus of many centers now is to involve a higher percentage of trainees in production. Once producing, the challenge the center faces is providing incentives for people to keep expanding their skills.

Politics particularly on the local level, continues as a large component of access management duties. Access increasingly competes with an array of municipal programs for franchise fees and other diminishing government funding. Successful access managers have developed a political constituency, articulated the community services they provide and then quantified their accomplishments.

The dependency on municipal funding has lead some centers to look toward diversifying their services and income opportunities. Access managers debated the issues of turning to profit generating activities and the impact of those activities on providing public access. Some are looking at fees to recover the costs of providing services.

Data collection and analysis are now key parts of the access manager's job. Computer software development has improved the efficiency of data management at many access centers. The analysis of this data is helping managers plan for equipment purchases, playback, scheduling, and resource management.

At this time, several cities are involved in a transfer of management for access services. The trend now appears to be changing from an access operation managed by a cable company to management by a non-profit organization.

The big issues continue to loom: court challenges, changing technologies and the KKK. Once the cable industry stops threatening access in the courts and the KKK ceases their intimidation of the cities, access can work more effectively in partnership with the cable industry to promote this unique forum for public expression.

For the present, the cable industry in general appears to have ignored access promotion opportunities. However, access managers are heartened to hear cable industry representatives talking about using access in their marketing strategies.

In the background of all the talk in meeting rooms, hallways, and hotel lounges, many listened with interest to the enticing tinkling of the telco's bell.

## COMMUNITY PRODUCERS

Community producers from around the country quickly found that they share common problems. These are problems that reflect the nature of the television medium and public access in particular. They are not without solution, however, and were the subject of many discussions at the annual convention.

Building and keeping a crew was mentioned by many as their single most critical problem to solve. The volunteer production crew used by the community producer requires the good management skills of any television producer and also

the people to people skills that are intrinsic to working with volunteers. The solutions and tips for assistance are found in books, papers and articles on each facet. Possessing only one of these skills leaves producers lacking.

Success in reaching your desired audience is a major goal for community producers. We start with hopes and goals up there somewhere in the Neilson ratings or at least we are committed to "getting our important message to as many people as possible. Reaching the primary audience or the audience that effects the primary audience is something that a community producer needs to keep in mind. Once the primary audience is identified, solutions come to mind. Ideas for getting out scheduling information are of particular importance to public access. The general promotional support that is beginning to be done by access corporations about public access channels has helped many communities. This is particularly true where they have been successful in obtaining program and channel listings alongside regular broadcast television and satellite delivered cable channels. The efforts of individual producers remain important, however. The utilization of fliers and signs at the event, special mailings, and notices in newsletters that reach the primary audience have been effective for many.

Technical reliability is a concern for all community producers. Once I had a dream; the dream was that there was an electrical heaven in which the camera's white balance was perfect, there were no power outages, the audio was crisp and clear, and the playback equipment for the access channels was maintained as consistently as the pay-per-view channels. Then I woke up to the morning of the real day. In the reality of the day, a community producer should communicate consistently to the cable company and the city that technical reliability is an essential element of "access" to the cable system. I woke up to the reality of the technical limitations of the access equipment and worked with those limitations in a professional manner. I woke up to responsibility that I shared with other community producers to teach one another about the care and proper use of the equipment made available to us. I also have discovered

*continued on next page*



ered that simple and small is beautiful when it comes to equipment for a community producer.

One success inspires many to follow. The creative energy shared at any gathering of community producers keeps bringing us together.

## GOVERNMENT ACCESS

Forty-one government access managers, staff, and programmers met at their opening constituency session at the 1988 NFLCP National Convention in Tampa. The participants represented a wide spectrum of government access users. After listing a variety of issues and concerns, the following topics were discussed.

Almost everyone cablecast their local government meetings. Many people had questions regarding where to obtain programming from outside sources. Participants shared various criteria used to judge the appropriateness of outside programming for showing in their community. These criteria included: determining the benefit of the program to local citizens; whether the program was produced by another government agency; whether the program was commercial in nature; whether there was any locally produced programming available as an alternative.

Most participants felt that informative programming produced by other government agencies was an appropriate alternative to long hours of character-generated programming. Many participants "localized" an outside program by tagging information about local agencies at the end of the program. On the other hand, some participants felt that repeating meetings or other locally produced programming was a more appropriate.

Overwhelmingly, participants in the closing session wanted more workshops on municipal programming, including a municipal programming showcase so that municipal access staff could watch programs from other areas. One of the best received ideas was asking municipal access staffs to bring short sample tapes to the conference for review in the opening session.

A popular convention workshop was the session on computer-based graphics. Many channels depend on these systems to program the off hours and participants were interested in ways to improve them.

Participants had questions regarding

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automated playback systems versus staffed systems. Most people had manual systems, and offered suggestions for improvement, including rotating staff to reduce burn-out, and providing staff with duties they could accomplish while monitoring playback. Cities with automated playback systems advised that these were high maintenance systems, and required routine adjustment to avoid breakdown.

Participants discussed the usefulness of determining a dollar value for government access services, even for those departments which don't charge fees. This value can be used during budget hearings to justify an increase, or to show how much money saved by having an in-house department. Suggestions included: The cost of staff time used in pre-production, scripting, production, post-production, and distribution; Developing a rate card based on equipment life and staff time; Charging for all outside costs, including rental of additional equipment, talent, and graphics.

One benefit of determining the cost of production is that video can then be compared to other media. Many times the in-house cable TV department is cost effective in reaching a large populations.

Although most of the participants did not involve elected officials in day-to-day programming decisions, they did make an effort to keep them informed. News releases about new programming were routinely put in city council meeting packets. An annual presentation was made at a city council meeting to up-date the council on the previous year's activities. One city routinely videotaped profiles of new city council members when they assumed office.

Everyone agreed it was important to keep elected officials happy and informed, however almost all cities had restrictions on use of the channel by elected

## FCC RULEMAKING FOR ACCESS CHANNELS

The FCC proposes to extend its 1972 cable television signal quality guidelines for broadcast television to access channels, two-way channels and cable networks. This rulemaking is in response to a recent court of appeals decision which upheld the FCC's authority to limit the technical standards of local franchising authorities to the FCC's existing broadcast signal guidelines. The rulemaking stated that the absence of federal technical standard for other signals might make it impossible for local franchising authorities to carry out their responsibilities to evaluate cable signal quality under the franchise renewal provisions of the Cable Act. The existing technical guidelines have long been considered outdated by access programmers who seek better picture quality. You can participate in the rulemaking, (MM Docket 85-038) "FCC Proposes Extending Technical Signal Guidelines to All Television Classes of Cable"; FCC, 1919 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554.

officials during election times. It was important to most participants that the government channel be perceived as being free from political influence.

A list of promotional tips was also developed by participants. These included: Use an answering machine to provide recorded program information; Use cable system ad availabilities (30-sec. spots on CNN, MTV, etc.); Place ads in cable guide, newspapers, and electronic cable guide; Use other media, including newspaper, talk shows, calendar listings; Developing a program guide and sending it out to a mailing list.

*The following individuals contributed to this report: Joseph J. McGovern, Jr., Supervisor of Media Services, Rhode Island State Library Services; Marcia Standiford, Executive Director, Evanston Community Television Corporation; Alex Quinn, Executive Director, Multnomah Cable Access; Jan Sanders, 1989 NFLCP Conference Committee, Dallas, Texas; Speranza Avram, Cable Consultant, Sacramento, California; Laura Greenfield, Cable TV Manager for the City of Santa Monica, California.*



## Short Notes and Announcements...

The fall conference of the **Central States Region** will be hosted at Paducah Community College on October 14, 15, & 16, 1988. For information contact: PCC-TV, Paducah Community College, P.O. Box 7380, Paducah, Kentucky, 42002

Janette Ruiz took **HOMETOWN** photos at the awards ceremony. She will print copies for \$9.00 per photo, and can be reached at 813-960-3686.

**Notice to all you organizers...**when you have regional conferences, festivals, plans, special events, or other announcements, please let us know well in advance so we may list them in **CTR**. Our publication is bi-monthly and we need the submission one month prior to the date of publication. The next issue is Nov/Dec, which means we need to have your material by **Oct. 15**. Send information to **CTR**, 3004 Aquila, Tampa, Florida 33629.

**Bulk orders of CTR are now available** to access centers and other member organizations for distribution to their mailing list. The publication can be sent out as a regular or special benefit in addition to normal mailings. You may also use them for volunteer benefits, membership solicitations, local advocacy efforts, or to just have them around the center for distribution. The cost is determined according to quantity, and is passed on to member organizations as cheaply as possible. Contact **CTR** for details and delivery.

### **HOMETOWN AWARDS AND KEYNOTE SPEECH AVAILABLE**

VHS Copies of the 1988 Hometown Awards and the Keynote speech by Steve Tuttle will be dubbed for distribution on Oct. 15, 1988. Those requesting copies of the tapes **MUST PAY IN ADVANCE** by that date. **No orders will be filled after that deadline.** The Hometown Awards is on one tape, and Tuttle's keynote speech is on a second tape. Each tape is \$30.00 (\$58.00 for both). Please send your order and payment in writing stating which tapes you wish to receive. The tapes may be cablecast without further clearance. Tapes will be mailed on approximately Nov. 1st.

The **Portland Oregon Metro Chapter** of the NFLCP will be holding a meeting at Mount Hood Community College on **Oct. 29th and 30th**. George Stoney will be in attendance. Call Jack Schoemer at 503-667-7109 for more info.

The local planning committee for the 1989 National Convention welcomes your suggestions and comments. Contact **Barbara Dickson**, 214-361-3060 or **Kathy Blaylock**, at (214) 620-2622.

The **FAR WEST REGION** of the NFLCP will host a **regional conference Nov. 19th and 20th** at Santa Barbara, Calif. Please call Deb Viseel, 714-680-8842; David Kerr, 415-459-5246; or Ron Cooper, 916-456-8600 for info. Cheap motels are available (30.00 per night).

### **COMMUNITY ACCESS FACILITATOR WANTED**

Ann Arbor Michigan's municipally operated community access center, providing public, educational and government access is seeking an experienced access facilitator. This person is responsible for all technical facilities and their use, including training and assisting the public with planning and production of programming; scheduling; supervision and operation of all facility equipment; reporting on facilities and their usage; supervision of volunteers, staff & interns. This work requires a thorough understanding of television technology and production, the ability to work effectively with a diversity of individuals and community groups, excellent speaking and writing skills, and the ability to work variable hours. Salary Range: **\$20,442 - \$26,161** plus excellent benefits. Contact: Personnel/Human Rights Dept., City of Ann Arbor, 100 N. 5th Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48107, **Deadline: October 24, 1988.**

Help! Midwest regional hospital is looking for resources and ideas for a closed circuit **"Laughter Television Channel"**. Call (319)369-7996, Jan Adkins-Hearn, RN Wellness Consultant, St. Luke's Hospital, 1026 A Avenue N.E., Cedar Rapids, IA 52402

## "Urban Access" *cont.* Sacramento

Sacramento's public access production and playback facilities, managed by the Sacramento Community Cable Foundation, opened in October, 1986. After 220 months of operation, over 1,700 original programs have been cablecast, representing nearly 1,200 hours of first-run programming. 700 people have been certified for use of the equipment.

Key to the early success of public access in Sacramento is the Foundation's unique training program. The Foundation established a partnership with the local community college district to create a multi-faceted curriculum. After two years, these training courses have generated nearly 4,000 enrollments.

Of the nine programs entered in the 1988 Hometown USA Video Festival, five were selected as finalists and two were chosen as winners. Recent programming highlights include a documentary about U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Anthony Kennedy, a Sacramento native, an open-air jazz concert featuring Dizzy Gillespie and his band, a play about teenage peer pressure and pregnancy prevention called "Guess Who's Pregnant?" (produced by teenagers), a highly critical documentary about Sacramento's troubled nuclear power plant, and a special week of programming about U.S. involvement in Central America.

During the past year, public access activities have been maintained and expanded despite a stunning federal court ruling in August, 1987 which upheld a challenge to the local franchising process. That decision led to a succession of other lawsuits and counter suits which put access in jeopardy. Eventually, an agreement was reached which transferred access funding responsibility from the cable operator to the local government, but at significantly reduced levels. Throughout this very difficult period, the Foundation worked to mobilize community support, met with elected representatives on a regular basis, and received extensive editorial support from local media. This aid was crucial to the Foundation's subsequent efforts to defeat an 11th-hour proposal in March by government attorneys to eliminate all funding for access and a recommendation in April by government

*continued on next page*



staff to reduce the previously committed funding level by 40%.

Plans are now underway to open a second production facility by the end of this year. The Foundation has also hired a professional fundraising consultant to assist in efforts to obtain additional revenues. Like most access centers across the country, the success of outside fundraising activities will be crucial to meet needs of Sacramento residents in the future.

### **St. Paul**

In June 1988, Cable Access St. Paul, Inc. celebrated its first full year in a downtown storefront which was designed specifically for access television production. The facility features a 24 by 36 foot, 3 camera (Ikegami) studio with a 100 year old brick wall for backdrop. Additional facilities include 5 edit suites in VHS and 3/4 inch, an audio production set-up, and a variety of portable gear. A second larger studio and a well-equipped mobile production van are shared with the L.O. department at Continental Cablevision.

Cable Access St. Paul operates seven channels on Continental's 60 channel system: Educational Access (mainly the St. Paul Public Schools); Religious Access: Metro Transit local bus schedules on VideoText; Community Bulletin Board VideoText; Cable Hearing Impaired Channel (a VideoText service called "deaf radio" by founder Steve Brunelle) bundled with local video and the Silent Network; Public Access Channel 33; and Public Affairs Access, which carries gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Minnesota House of Representatives, Senate, and other government meetings.

St. Paul has trained more than 600 individuals in video production with 50 active in any single month. In 1987, more than 480 hours of non-duplicated community programming was featured on the channels, along with 2,500 pages of text messages from 350 organizations.

The level of access use and number of productions has been high. The main challenge is demand for services that exceed budget and staffing capacity. As a result, staff burn out is a main problem.

One major bout with controversy occurred when teenagers slipped into the access studio one morning and dropped their pants live on cable. By coincidence, that same day the cable company master

## **Congratulations to NFLCP Award Winners!**

**George Stoney Award for Humanistic Communications**

**Michael Meyerson**

**Professor of Law, University of Baltimore**

**Sue Miller Buske Leadership Award**

**Jan Leshner Ireland**

**NFLCP Chairperson 1985-87**

**Community Communications Award for Public Access**

**Wyoming Community Television**

**Wyoming, Michigan**

**Community Communications Award for Institutional Access**

**Dallas Independent School District**

**Dallas, Texas**

control operator erred and transmitted a porno feed onto the Religious Access channel for 8 minutes during prime time.

### **Tucson**

Tucson Community Cable Corporation operates four public access channels and cablecast 10,331 hours of programming in 1987. During the year, 2,225 members received training resulting in 1,354 hours of new programs. Membership increased to 5,556 Tucson residents.

Additional highlights in 1987 included the unprecedented gavel-to-gavel coverage of the Frank Jarvis Atwood murder trial, coverage of the Pope's visit to Arizona, the successful implementation of incentive/outreach projects, recognition in the form of numerous local and national programming awards, the implementation of the nation's first interactive public access text retrieval system, and the selection of a new Executive Director, Sam Behrend, to replace Jan Leshner Ireland.

Educational access in Tucson is managed by two local educational institutions. Pima Community College operates two channels of college credit telecourses and Tucson Unified School District operates one channel for "Homework for the Homebound" and "Math Homework Hotline." In addition, the Tucson/Pima Arts Council operates an arts channel featuring a computer generated arts calendar.

The City of Tucson operates one government access program channel with live city council meetings, interviews, sports and arts programming, and 3 text channels. The Tucson Fire Department

uses a scrambled channel for training.

*Thanks to the following individuals contributing to this report: Robin Reidy, Executive Director, IMAGE Film/Video Center & Vice-President of People TV; Hubert Jessup, General Manager, Boston Community Access and Programming Foundation, Inc.; Margie Nicholson, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Chicago Access Corporation.; Randy Van Dalsen, Executive Director, Sacramento Community Cable Foundation.; Neil Gosman, Executive Director, Cable Access St. Paul.; Sam Behrend, Executive Director, Tucson Community Cable Corporation.*

### **ALLIANCE OFFICERS ELECTED IN TAMPA...**

The Alliance for Communications Democracy is an independent not for profit organization which participates in court cases where the constitutionality of access is in question. At its annual meeting during the NFLCP convention, the Alliance elected a slate of officers: The President is Sherry Goodman; Treasurer, Ralph Malvik; Asst. Treasurer, Ed Nicholas; Secretary, Hubert Jessup.

The Alliance invites the support from all access organizations and friends of access for its continuing participation in major cases concerning Access. The Alliance has the expert legal guidance of Joe Van Eaton, Spiegel & McDiarmid, and Michael Meyerson, Professor of Law at the University of Baltimore. For information, please contact Ralph Malvik at 7548 Standish Place, Rockville, Maryland 20855, phone (301) 424-1730.



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### "ERIE" cont. from page 1

to alter the bargain struck by the parties without voiding the entire agreement. Because ETI had stated it was not seeking to void the entire franchise, the Court decided it could not grant ETI the relief requested. The Court noted in passing that "ETI's substantial investment as the exclusive cable operator in the City would

render ETI unwilling to expose itself to the risk of losing its franchise."

The City of Erie also argued that the cable company had waived its right to challenge the franchise on constitutional grounds. Erie pointed out that at the time the franchise was issued, ETI and the city had been sued by a disappointed applicant for the franchise. The litigation was

settled and ETI released the City and a competing applicant for the franchise from all claims arising out of the franchise. ETI argued this general release was not meant to cover constitutional claims.

The Court sided with the city. The Court stated that First Amendment rights can be waived, provided the waiver is "voluntary, knowing, and intelligent." The Court found as a result of the publication of Cablespeech and other pro-industry articles, ETI could not seriously claim that it didn't know First Amendment challenges could be raised to the franchise.

The Court found ETI obtained a substantial benefit from the release: by entering into the settlement "ETI was able to terminate conclusively" competition from other cable companies" with respect to its monopoly and profits." In light of this benefit, "ETI may not seek to withdraw from performing its obligations..."

While the decision does not address First Amendment issues directly, the Court did conclude that it was "evident" that any injury ETI suffered as a result of the franchise fee and access requirements was not "an injury to its ability to express itself..."

The City lost on one issue. Erie had collected a large franchise fee prepayment from the cable television operator. The Court concluded that, after 1984, ETI was entitled to the time value of money on unamortized prepayments. ETI was given the right to renew its claim for the time value of money in 1990, at the end of the franchise term. The Alliance for Communications Democracy filed a brief in the appeal on behalf of access interests.



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